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Environment
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16 April 2020

The First Minister
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
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Dear First Minister,

Response to COVID-19 and the need for a green recovery.

I am writing on behalf of Scottish Environment LINK and our members to express our support for the leadership and clear advice you are providing during the COVID-19 emergency here in Scotland. As the pandemic continues to spread, we know that Scotland's citizens worry about their health, their families and the current and ongoing impact on their jobs and livelihoods. This is why, during this time of crisis, the leadership you are providing with a strong response and clear advice is helping to allay the uncertainty. Your responses, both today and in the coming weeks and months must address the immediate health, social and economic issues but in a way that improves the resilience of Scotland's economy towards the wellbeing of Scotland's people, communities and nature.

The response of the UK and Scottish Governments must address the health crisis itself and provide emergency rescue measures to avoid bankruptcies of small and medium businesses throughout Scotland as a result of the sudden cessation of normal economic activity. Organisations across the third sector are also reporting challenging times ahead. A survey we have recently undertaken has shown Scottish Environment LINK members are already seeing direct effects on their charitable incomes and ability to operate as normal to protect and give people access to Scotland's nature, champion iconic wildlife species and engage the public. Public stimulus measures designed to relaunch the economy will depend on crucial decisions on where financial flows should be directed. That is why we are calling on you, and the UK Government, to demonstrate leadership and foresight by **continuing to reinforce the trajectory you had placed Scotland on, towards a climate-neutral economy, a biodiversity rich future and a just and fair, green economic recovery.**



Scottish Environment LINK the voice for Scotland's environment



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Now is the time to bounce forward and demonstrate the shift towards an economy which is climate neutral, protects and restores our natural world, health and wellbeing, and lets nothing go to waste - in a way that is fair and leaves no-one behind. The Circular Economy Bill has the potential to move this along, which together with advice from the Just Transition Commission, the Infrastructure Commission and the Food and Farming Production Future Policy Group should inform and set the trajectory for Scotland moving forward from the crisis into a fairer and greener future. This would maintain Scotland in a trajectory in line with Europe's Green Deal – and is an [approach widely supported across the EU](#). These steps need to be complemented by targeted national support measures and funding, in order to deliver on the scale of the challenge and to set a sustainable direction.

From the start, public money must be invested in a transparent, viable and sustainable way. Business as usual is not an option, and economy-wide untargeted measures would risk putting on life-support obsolete and polluting industries and technologies today that have no future in tomorrow's economy. Instead, the stimulus packages must support 'future-proofing' companies through a transition of their business models towards sustainability, thereby ensuring a much higher return on public investment. For large companies, public support should be conditional on a full alignment with the climate targets, with targets coming out of the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2021 and with recommendations from the Just Transition Commission and the Infrastructure Commission. Channelling stimulus investments into green capital projects, in line with the National Planning Framework 4, should be used to create long-lasting jobs in clean sectors, supporting Scotland's economic recovery, and making our economy more resilient against future shocks. In the long term, this will leave us better equipped to tackle the ongoing climate and biodiversity emergencies, which, if left unchecked, will pose ever greater threats to our health, livelihoods and wellbeing.

Specifically, we believe that the Scottish Government, must:

1. Ensure stimulus funds and bailouts are consistent with the Scottish Government's action to address the climate and nature emergencies.

As economic recovery plans are being put in place, these investments must deliver long-term benefits for our society, and help make our economies more resilient to increasing shocks. These investments must be fully aligned with achieving progress towards the Government's stated aims on a climate-neutral economy, a nature-rich future and a fair and just society. This would also keep pace with the objectives and proposals of the European Green Deal, as well as the 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement.

2. Prepare to launch large-scale sustainable initiatives in line with public interest.

By preparing large-scale sustainable initiatives to launch after the current health crisis has eased, supported by public and private investments, the Scottish Government can provide direct employment for those affected by the economic downturn and help relaunch the economy. These projects must be in the public interest and be guaranteed to lead to direct emission reductions, health benefits and ecosystem restoration. These could include fast tracking and developing a large-scale initiative for the decarbonisation of transport, infrastructure



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improvements to allow zero emission transport modes, the renovation of buildings to make them energy efficient, accelerated deployment of renewable energy, and large-scale nature restoration projects.

3. Limit future health crises by acting against climate change and biodiversity loss as a global leader.

Climate change and biodiversity loss are increasingly exacerbating the spread of infectious disease according to the World Health Organization. These effects can only be limited by acting globally. However, Scotland can demonstrate clear leadership: the Edinburgh Declaration for COP15 and the future Climate COP26 in Glasgow are where Scotland can demonstrate a lead towards climate resilience and biodiversity restoration for future wellbeing and resilience. Scotland must demonstrate this leadership through continued work towards the Government's target to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2045, in line with science and equity. It must also adopt ambitious, legally-binding targets and commitments to address the alarming loss of nature.

4. Rebuild the economy through a green recovery.

As part of the emergency response, the Scottish Government has to assess where priority stimuli and rescue packages are most effective in terms of future jobs and long-term development that works towards a greener future. Any investment packages must therefore distinguish between industries that take Scotland towards meeting our climate targets, the recommendations of the Just Transition Commission and future biodiversity targets. Support packages must contribute to a managed and just transition which protects workers, communities and fully involves trades unions in moving Scotland into a climate neutral, nature rich, and fair future. Future generations cannot afford for us to commit to long-term investment in the wrong industries now when difficult choices about our future trajectory must be made.

During this time of worry and uncertainty for us all, we recognise the efforts you are undertaking on our behalf to overcome the immediate health crisis, and to provide support to the most vulnerable. We are ready to work with you to ensure that despite these challenges, we continue down Scotland's chosen path towards a climate-neutral economy, a nature-rich future and a genuinely inclusive, sustainable economy.

Yours sincerely,



Deborah Long

Chief Officer

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